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TAGS: OPRC KMDR KPAO GM IR AF SU

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: IRAN, AFGHANISTAN, SUDAN

- ¶1. Lead Stories Summary
- ¶2. Iranian Talks in Vienna
- ¶3. Afghanistan Election Fraud
- ¶4. New U.S. Policy on Sudan

¶1. Lead Stories Summary

ZDF-TV's primetime newscast Heute opened with a story on the criticism of the H1N1 vaccine and ARD-TV's primetime Tagesschau opened with a story on the government's plans to cut taxes. Most newspapers led with stories on the government's plans to reduce taxes. Sueddeutsche headlined: "Karzai snubs the West" by opposing a runoff. FAZ led with a story on EU subsidies for farmers. Tagesspiegel and Bild focused on the debate over H1N1. Editorials focused on the coalition talks, H1N1, and food security.

¶2. Iranian Talks in Vienna

Many newspapers carried factual reports on the talks on the Iranian nuclear program in Vienna. Frankfurter Allgemeine headlines "Constructive Nuclear Talks," referring to a statement by IAEA Director El Baradei who described the meetings as "quite constructive." Sueddeutsche headlined: "Tehran snubs Paris in nuclear dispute," noting in the intro: "Serious problems seem to have arisen in the talks between Iran, the U.S., Russia, France and the IAEA over the potential delivery of nuclear fuel rods for the research plant in Teheran. The Iranian TV network PressTV reported that Iran took Paris off the list of potential suppliers." Several newspapers

also continued to focus on the recent bomb attack in Iran that killed 42 people. Sueddeutsche headlined: "Iran threatens U.S. and Britain with retaliation."

13. Afghanistan Election Fraud

Die Welt headlined "Election Commission presents devastating analysis," and reported: "Sources say Karzai is outraged about the prospect of a second round of elections." Sueddeutsche headlined "Karzai snubs the West" by opposing a runoff," while Spiegel Online headlined: "U.S. pushes Karzai to runoff," asking: "Will Hamid Karzai give into American pressure? Given the massive election fraud last summer, the Afghan president is supposed to run once again against his rival Abdullah. According to the latest agency reports, he seems to be willing to reach a compromise."

In a front page editorial, Frankfurter Allgemeine highlighted: "The elections in Afghanistan have brought the country into a hopeless situation. Only the Taliban will benefit from it." The editorial elucidates: "Through involuntary cooperation with the former darling Karzai, the international community has managed to maneuver the

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country into an absolutely hopeless situation.... If it comes down to it, a runoff will not lead to more legitimacy simply because there will be low voter turnout. Neither would the option of cooperation between Karzai and Abdullah be promising. Voters will feel deceived if Karzai and Abdullah agree to cooperate. Given the inherent centrifugal forces of a national unity government, such a situation would soon result in new elections anyway. The Taliban are watching maliciously. They could not make a better fool out of the international community and the Karzai government than if they were doing this themselves."

Sueddeutsche editorialized: "Karzai faces two unpleasant options: if he gives in to international pressure and allows a runoff, he would again be more popular in the West. However, he would also lose respect among his Pashtu voters, from whose point of view, there can be no doubt that one of them has to run the country.... The second option is that Karzai ignores the evidence of massive election fraud and rejects the runoff that he is offered as a means to regain his legitimacy. He would then make any cooperation with the 42 nations rebuilding his country impossible."

Tagesspiegel commented: "It can be debated whether a runoff is necessary or whether the will of the people would be legitimately expressed if Karzai and Abdullah share the power. Together, they received some 70 percent of the votes. However, the blackmailing must be stopped. The West cannot create the elite it needs there, but it is also true that those who need help must credibly earn it through their own efforts. Stabilization efforts will not succeed if the Afghans don't help themselves. If the goal is unreachable, the

sacrifices would no longer make sense."

FT Deutschland remarked: "Two months after the presidential elections in Afghanistan, things are becoming clearer. This is the good news.

However, on the other hand, the UN commission's results have plunged

NATO allies into a serious dilemma with no good way out. The camp of

President Karzai, which the West supported, did not just massively manipulate the elections, but also failed to get the absolute majority

despite the use of fraud. This does not mean that any of his opponents would have won the elections. All sides tried to manipulate

the outcome. However, given these facts, one thing no longer works:

the fraud can no longer be played down as insignificant, suggesting that Karzai would have won anyway. The democratic legitimacy of the president is no more. However, it is completely unclear what the West's response should be. A runoff would be the only option under

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normal circumstances.... However, Afghan circumstances are anything else but normal, particularly because of the extremely tense security situation in the country. "

¶4. New U.S. Policy on Sudan

Die Welt headlined: "Obama no longer wants to isolate Sudan," and added: "The U.S. government has presented a new strategy on Sudan-Darfur conflict is no longer the focus but instead the stabilization

of the whole region." Under the headline "And nobody is interested in

Hillary Clinton-America's foreign policy is not defined by its appropriate secretary," Frankfurter Allgemeine reported: "On Monday,

Secretary Clinton announced Washington's new strategy to create peace

in Sudan. Hardly anybody in the country took notice of her presentation and the change of American policy on Sudan. Special Envoy Scott Gration had already discussed in the press the basics of

the new approach... All that was left to the official head of the State

Department was to officially announce the change," the paper notes.

Under the headline "Obama the cold-blooded realist," Sueddeutsche editorialized that "the pragmatic course towards Sudan's murderous regime shows the President's view.... There was a time when Barack

Obama simply viewed Sudan as hell.... As a candidate for the most powerful office in the world, he promised in the election campaign to

deploy international troops and exert more pressure on Khartoum by imposing sanctions. After nine months in office, the President takes

a different view on the world and seeks a qualified dialogue with Sudan's regime. The dictator Bashir, formerly outlawed as the devil,

can now hope for some American respect. America's new strategy on Sudan means a change indeed-not just in the sense of the promises the

prophet of change and hope made, but particularly compared with the saber-rattling policy of the Bush administration. America now tries

to take a different route. In the style of classic diplomacy, Washington now offers many carrots and not many sticks."

Under the headline "Policy on the verge of an illusion," Die Welt opined: "The discrepancy between word and action must be highlighted concerning Obama's new strategy on Sudan. The difference might not be larger than that of other politicians but it does reduce the unrealistic redemptive expectations that we saw during the inauguration of the 44th President. The wheel has been invented before."

MURPHY